

Talbot County Economic Development Commission
Easton Diner, Easton, MD
December 5, 2013 Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Chairman, Walter Chase, Sr.; Vice Chairman, Ted Bautz; Gerald O'Mara; Haim Loran; Ann Borders; Susie Hayward; Paul Makosky; and Len Wendowski

Ex Officio Members Present: Terenda Thomas, Mike Henry, Shannon Dill, Corey Pack and Dr. Viniar

Members Excused: John General, Geoff Oxnam and Peter Dunbar

Attendees: Gordon Fronk, Town of Oxford Representative for Peter Dunbar, Art Reeside, Laura Heikes, Scott Warner and Tim Jones

Guest Speaker: Mary Ellen Carter, owner of Express Employment Professionals (EEP), was introduced and provided an overview of her company and views on the community workforce. EEP is a full-service staffing agency whose mission is to help employers find good people and good people find good jobs, both in temporary and long-term employment. EEP moved from Washington, D.C. seven years ago and they have offices in Easton and Salisbury. Over the past two years, 26% of EEP's billings were in the Talbot County area. In 2013, EEP put over 300 people in full time jobs and many more in temporary positions. One of the biggest challenges is finding people who will work and stay in positions that pay \$7.25 per hour. EEP works with employers to find ways to pay better wages. Those most affected by unemployment were in middle-management positions. Another of EEP's challenge is to encourage employers to hire overqualified people. Employers believe that overqualified people will leave the company as soon as they find better opportunities. Ms. Carter reported that healthcare is trending down. Last year, 56% of temporary work was in light industrial; this year, 67% of temporary work was light industrial companies. In terms of skills, they are delighted to get CDL and welders right out of Chesapeake College. Skilled HVAC people are very difficult to find and there seems to be a shortage of electricians, plumbers, and other skilled tradesmen in our area.. EEP encourages employers to hire apprentices, so they may train them according to their company's specifications.

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:05 a.m. by Chairman Walter Chase, at the Easton Diner, located on Route 50 in Easton, MD 21601. A quorum was present.

Agenda and Minutes: The Agenda for the December 5, 2013 Commission Meeting was approved without changes. A motion was made by Len Wendowski and seconded by Paul Makosky to approve the October 3rd Minutes. A motion was made by Ted Bautz and seconded by Haim Loran to approve the November 7th Minutes. The approved Minutes will be posted to the Talbot County website.

Correspondence: The ED Director advised that there was no correspondence this month.

Old Business: The ED Director reported that the revisions to Bill 737 were reviewed in November but we did not have a quorum present to approve the revisions. An email was sent to the ED Commission members and enough votes came back in order for the Director to send the revisions for Bill 737 to the County Managers' office for review by County Attorney and consideration of County Council. We will be advised when the matter comes to the County Council. Once the revisions are approved the Bill will take six months to codify. Bill 736 will provide the county with a competitive incentive for companies to locate and expand. An application to apply for the Tax Credit will be drafted by the ED Office and the Finance Office.

The EDC discussed the formation of two committees in response to the “Talbot County and Towns Strategic Plan,” proposed by Sage Policy Group, to begin work on priorities for recommendations for a more “Business Friendly environment” and to work on a more aggressive and competitive “Marketing Plan” as supported by the County Council. The Department of Permits and Inspection Office has begun work on streamlining the county permits process and the Chamber has addressed some of these issues through the legislative Committee. It was agreed that the Business Environment Committee would be formed to review the county and towns process from a customer’s viewpoint and to make recommendations to improve and shorten the process. A Fast Track process was also mentioned for commercial and industrial projects. Ted Bautz has agreed to Chair the Business Environment Committee and establish a scope of work to outline priorities. Susie Hayward and Walter Chase are interested in serving on this committee. Sandy Coyman, Talbot County Planning Officer, indicated he would like to be a part of this group. Mr. Bautz suggested a planning meeting would take place prior to the next EDC meeting to discuss additional details. Local business representatives, as well as a planner, regarding implementation of occupancy, will be asked to join the committee. The county and town should have the same processes and work together. It was suggested by Paul Makosky that we tie the incentive to a fast-track process.

The second committee is to review and address a marketing plan to attract business to the county. At issue is to examine how we will work within a limited budget and prioritize what to accomplish and what the Council may be willing to fund in FY 2015. Haim Loran has agreed to serve as Chair on the Marketing Committee and will first meet with members of the Council to determine the interest in business attraction and the kinds of companies that would be a good fit.. Because relocating a company is a traumatic experience, Mr. Loran suggested we find those businesses who we know already want to move and we compete with other states to attract them to Talbot County. Mr. Loran is looking for guidance and mandate from Council as far as what we are allowed to offer companies looking to move to Talbot County. Erik Neil and Geoff Oxnam have expressed interest in serving on the Marketing Committee. This committee will also have input from the private sector.

The ED Director reported that the Waterfowl Festival Breakfast was well attended and many people seemed to enjoy the opportunity to network. Partnering with the Waterfowl Festival had been viewed as an opportunity to entertain prospects. This year the ED Office hosted a Chocolatier prospect that is interested in relocating a facility to the Easton area and was very impressed with the town and the event.

The ED Director deferred the proposed Phosphorous Management Tool issue to Shannon Dill. Ms. Dill reported that the Phosphorous Management tool is a proposed piece of legislation that would curtail the ability to use chicken manure to grow corn crops. The legislation has been introduced twice and pulled twice and it is believed it will come up again. The legislation proposes the restriction of fertilizers on farm crops to reduce the removal through runoff and research does not answer how much of a restriction should be placed on the fields and over what period of time to determine how this policy will affect the economics of agriculture. This is not a poultry issue; this is an animal-agriculture issue. Ms. Dill expressed surprise that the dairy industry had not shown more concern with this regulation because animal waste and chicken litter is handled differently. The governor’s office received over 500 letters urging the legislation to be postponed following state led hearings in various counties. The Water Implementation Plan (WIP) is a statewide initiative requiring all the counties to measure and account for the load of nitrogen and phosphorus levels in our water table and how it affects the Chesapeake Bay according to EPA standards. Counties not in compliance will be fined. The Phosphorous Management tool was proposed as a mechanism to reduce phosphorous from running off into the Bay.

The ED Director reported that we are continuing to work on Executive Pulse, the web-based client management system for Talbot County, which provides interaction from service providers and those who

want access to company data in Talbot County. The ED Director reviewed Executive Pulse with the members of the CORE meeting. Ms. Hall is in the process of updating business information to the system. A report will be generated for the EDC to represent business activity in 2014.

New Business:

The ED Director reviewed the Maryland Competitiveness Initiative, a state chamber led program that has been holding a series of workshops, to educate potential candidates, like those running for Governor, on issues that are impacting Maryland relative to other states. A discussion ensued. Talbot County is represented by the Talbot County Chamber of Commerce.

The MACO Conference will be held on December 11-13, in Cambridge at the Hyatt. The Conference highlights legislative issues that will be addressed in Annapolis beginning with the session in January. The Commission may have a bigger role to play in support of the business community; however, the Commission's role is to advise the County Council and not to step out on political issues.

Mr. Bautz indicated that the Easton Economic Development Cooperation (EEDC) Board meets tomorrow and he will advise them of our Business Environment and Marketing Committee, as far as setting up liaisons. The ED Director suggested that once the EEDC is up and running we invite the Chair to meet with us.

The ED Director reported the Defense/Government Contractors survey was sent out. Feedback is sought to identify what kinds of resources may be required and with whom they would like to meet. The EDC has hosted a meeting for the contractors in the past and there is consideration to host a meeting for them in January or February.

Jason Broadwater, CEO, Revenflo and author, "*Old Town – New World*," has been invited to tour our community and to speak with us on Wednesday, December 11th, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the Talbot County Library in Easton. He will be speaking at the MACO meeting, in Cambridge, regarding economic development, internet and the millennium generation and how they will change how we do business in our towns. We have invited him to speak at our Annual Business Appreciation Breakfast on April 24, 2014.

Chairman's Report: Walter Chase, Town of Trappe: attended the Talbot Park and Recreation Commission Meeting on November 21; the Mid-Shore Regional Council Board Meeting on November 22nd; and he met with Trappe business owners on November 25th with the ED Director to discuss signage on Route 50 and how to attract more businesses and stores to Trappe. The Trappe Town Council met on December 4th. Shore Regional Health hosted a Health Cluster meeting in Carolina County on December 2nd regarding health care in Talbot, Carolina, and Dorchester Counties. Our hospital is still on the "rolling delay."

Director's Report: Copies of the director's report were available for review. Ms. Bethke reported she has initiated meetings with the towns business and merchants associations in an effort to support retention and expansion efforts..

Member Activity Reports: Corey Pack, Council Liaison: reported the Council accepted a bid for the Harrison Street property for \$1.5 million. The Council is working with the new buyer regarding the space. The FAA gave permission to the Council to release the Cloverfields property for sale on Route 50. The Council accepted a bid and is working with the buyer to execute that purchase. The Council is working with the Town of Easton to remove trees that are hazardous to the airport. The Waterfowl breakfast was excellent. The Council is about to go into their budget session. Kathy Foster will be retiring; her vacancy will not take effect until October 2014. The Council will be getting back to the Commission regarding properties concerning the Election Board and the Health Department and potential assistance in utilization.

The Council has been briefed and held public hearings on the proposed Forestry Policy but no further action has taken place. The Department of Planning and Permits is exploring alternatives for notification of neighboring property owners when timber harvesting is to occur. **Dr. Viniar, Chesapeake College:** reported their “countdown to construction” for the new Allied Health Building was a success. Participation from the counties and the state was appreciated, as well as student speakers and former Ravens Coach Billick, who is very dedicated to the Eastern Shore. Coach Billick was presented with a Skipjack bobble head. The Skipjack girls’ basketball team is undefeated in their conference. Chesapeake College is starting two new programs: Exercise Science and Sports Management and both will be transferable to Salisbury and Frostburg. The college has completed the semester and begins work on the FY 15 budget. **Gordon Fronk, Town of Oxford:** reported that Oxford’s demand for consideration of the solar panel array was not adequate to justify the expense of the installation. Trappe and Oxford could be coupled in order to do this, and it may still be in consideration. The proposal for the storm water utility fee, regarding the effect of rising waters, falling land, and cutting off the town, was supported by those who attended the meetings. There may be more objections once the proposal gets out to the entire community. Fees for commercial property owners will be determined. With these fees, the Town of Oxford would expect to raise \$100,000 per year, not enough money to replace the storm water infrastructure estimated to cost \$3 million; however, they could maintain and make improvements. The Oxford storm water utility fee may have some leverage for future funding options. Oxford was offered a free 62-72 foot Elko, a 1920’s craft that could be used as a goodwill ambassador on the water, carrying parties of 20-30. However, the cost of retrofitting the boat exceeds any funding they could obtain, so Oxford had to pass on the offer. **Susie Hayward, Real Estate:** reported that real estate is heading into the slow season. Next month’s report will show higher settlements only because all the contracts have come in from previous months. Ms. Hayward indicated that she does not expect to see new contracts until the season picks up in early spring. Ms. Hayward reported that presently clients are only interested in new listings. The Estimated End-of-November Figures follows:

Area	Sold	For Sale
Talbot	42	583
Easton	30	277
St Michaels	6	76
Oxford	2	48
Tilghman	2	36
Trappe	0	43

Haim Loran, Manufacturing: no report. **Terenda Thomas, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations (DLLR) Workforce:** reported a decline in the number of job seekers for the month of November. DLLR Business Resource Representatives are aggressively approaching employers to identify jobs for job seekers. They have a new veterans’ representative and the new Disabled Veterans Outreach Program (DVOP) is in place, reaching out to other agencies and organizations to assist veterans. The current veterans are not connecting with the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) so they are difficult to reach. There is a push statewide to identify job opportunities for veterans. Ms. Carter advised that there is a tax credit for employers who hire veterans. **Laura Heikes, Talbot Bank:** appreciates attending the commission meetings on behalf of Talbot Bank and reminded everyone that Talbot Bank is here to offer assistance with any marketing or business initiatives. **Len Wendowski, Town of Easton:** reported Easton is having their Christmas parade on Saturday, December 7th and Freddy the Reindeer will light up tomorrow. Easton received a clean business audit which be presented at the next town meeting, Monday, December 16th at 6 p.m.. The town will be reviewing a revision to the impact fees that should take place in January. Dick’s Sporting Goods cleared the planning board, as did Harris Teeter for Projects in the

Waterside Village. **Tim Jones, Chesapeake College:** reported on the construction of the Allied Health building will result in 300 jobs and a major investment. **Mike Henry, Airport:** reported there is a misunderstanding in the community regarding the tree removal project vs. the runway development. They are two separate projects and the removal of the trees is a real safety issue, which was identified in 1998. The Airport has spent \$2 million on the project and the tree removal is not yet complete, although they are getting closer. The solar panel project for the Airport is going before the Council. Both fuel sales and the traffic count are up for the year. Airport traffic is up 17% from last year and the tower counts on that traffic increase since the FAA funding runs out January 15th. They are working with our senators and Congressman Harris' office to get language included in the continuing resolution to fund, not just our tower, but also the 251 towers in the country. The Easton Airport partnered with Habitat for Humanity on Airport Day and the council will present a check to Habitat in January for \$4,500. **Ted Bautz, Vice Chairman, Business Community:** provided a general observation that some of the retailers reported they had the best Waterfowl Festival Weekend ever and many of them are optimistic for the Christmas holiday. He continues to see office vacancies that are trophy investment properties. Many of the vacancies are medical office spaces caused by doctors having their practices purchased by Shore Health or retiring. **Shannon Dill, Agriculture:** attended the annual AG Policy Meeting. On the federal level, there is still no Farm Bill. The committees are split between the food stamp/food initiatives, compared to agricultural initiatives. On the state side, there is an expectation of additional pesticide legislation that will be introduced. A group out of Baltimore City proposed a chicken tax; five cents per bird to be paid to the poultry industries to pay for conservation practices. Winter programs are scheduled and the January 23rd Easton VFW will host the 62nd Corn Club Banquet. Maryland Public Television Broadcasts a Maryland Farm Program on Tuesday evenings at 7 – Charlie Adams, with Trappe's Rural Life Museum, was highlighted on episode 3 regarding the canning industry. Shannon reported that harvesting trees can be an issue that the community does not understand and and they have an educational program they can offer regarding timber and timber harvest. Mike Henry asked Shannon if there was a way to inform people that they are spraying seeds and not spraying chemicals as he is inundated with phone calls at the Airport. Shannon indicated that her office receives those calls as well. There is a press release; however, not everyone reads the newspaper. **Gerry O'Mara, Agriculture:** acknowledged University of Maryland Extension as a great program working with farmers and agriculture and there is virtually total cooperation by all. **Ann Borders, St Michaels:** reported that they are getting ready for Midnight Madness and Christmas weekends. Ms. Borders indicated that she was not at the last commission meeting because she was accepting an award for the 1812 Event. Ms. Borders reported that we would probably see some stores closing and some new stores opening as they go through their slow season and begin to reemerge in the spring. St Michaels has decided to hire one full-time or two part-time people to support communications and promoting St Michaels as a tourist destination. Tourism continues to be their main economic engine. **Art Reeside, Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulations:** reported that they participated in a Career Day at Easton High School in November, sponsored by the Rotary, with various industry representatives to explain available opportunities. Talbot County unemployment is continuing to go down, 6.4%, less than the state level, with 1200 unemployed people in the county and 200 jobs available. The Talbot County civilian workforce reports at approximately 19,000. The numbers regarding the county's civilian workforce from DLLR would be welcome by the EDC as a monthly report, if available. **Scott Warner, Executive Director, Mid-Shore Regional Council:** No report. **Ms. Carter, Express Employment Services,** concluded with advising the EDC that one of the biggest challenges, especially Talbot County, is helping employers understand that people do not have to have a completely clean criminal background record to be employed and be an asset to a company. Most of the larger employers prefer people who have no criminal background at all. Terenda Thomas mentioned the Federal Bonding Program, which is managed by DLLR, supports employers who hire those with criminal backgrounds. Education needs to be extended to the employers regarding how the bonding works, to demonstrate to employers that they may be protected for a substantial period of time. The ED Director will schedule a meeting with Ms. Carter and

Ms. Thomas to discuss interest in forming an EDC Workforce Committee to address these and other issues.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 am. Economic Development Commission Meetings are held at 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday of each month. The meetings are open to the public. **The next Commission Meeting will be held on January 2nd at 215 Bay Street, Suite 5, Conference Room 1, Easton, MD at 8:00 a.m.**

To view Express Employment Professionals online go to <http://www.expresspros.com/>.

To view the Proposal to Amend Nutrient Management Regulations, along with the Extension Bulletin to be incorporated by reference in the Maryland Nutrient Management Manual:
<http://mda.maryland.gov/Pages/Proposed-Regulations.aspx>.

A fact sheet “AgBrief: Phosphorous Management Tool - An Overview of the Proposed Regulations” is also available online at: http://mda.maryland.gov/Documents/ag_brief/AgBrief_PMT_092013.pdf

The Maryland Workforce Exchange and labor market information are available online at <https://mwejobs.maryland.gov/vosnet/Default.aspx>.